



Pete's PETS (Performance Enhancing Techniques):

Creating the Learning Environment in Practice.

“Ego” Outcome or Performance Oriented vs. Task – Oriented Goals

Consider these hypothetical statements by an athlete in a training group:

“I beat everyone in the 6 k time control without even having to work hard in practice”

“John is not doing the drill like you explained, that’s why I’m behind”

“I’m the only one in the group that can do the drill correctly”.

What’s similar about all these statements? Aside from seeming like the ramblings of an athlete with a bad attitude, all of them relate to the performance of the athlete in relation to the others in the training group. These types of comments are reflective of an athlete with an “ego” goal orientation. This is often referred to “ego”- oriented, or performance or outcome oriented goals.

Perceptions of success in the athletes are based on judging their capabilities relative to others in the training group; such as beating everyone else, or achieving more with less effort. Although this is something that a coach may want to foster in a competitive environment (as long as the athlete is technical able execute), in a training environment where developing a new skill, or technique is important, athletes need to be focused on improving relative to their own performance. Having an ego-oriented training environment will not create the proper setting for learning.

High-task orientation in a workout is associated with far more positive outcomes than ego-orientation, and can promote motivation to practice and persist. Athletes who are task oriented perform better and spend more time practicing than those with ego-orientation as the goal is to master a skill, or in canoe-kayak, master technique. As a coach, in order to help your athletes focus more on developing a new skill or technique, the first step is to improve your athlete’s perception of what “competence” means. This is something that a coach can do, and help foster in the daily training environment.

Structure the training environment so it more frequently encourages athletes to adopt task –oriented goals by focusing on:

- ✓ The *LEARNING PROCESS* rather than the *OUTCOME*
- ✓ *Mastering of skills*
- ✓ *Personal improvement*
- ✓ *Co-operation*
- ✓ *Effortful involvement*

Helping enhance the athlete’s perception of what *competence* or *mastery* means will improve their own confidence, which will be important when they do enter a competitive situation.



Goal Setting For The Practice

One of the first steps in developing task-orientation in your athletes is to set effective individual or team goals for each practice. Here are a few ideas for setting and communicating clear goals and objectives for the workout.

- 1) CLEARLY Communicate the goals, or intent of a practice, or task / drill to your athletes.

EG: In this drill, we are going to focus on keeping the paddling side arm as straight as possible during the propulsion phase. It does not matter if your hand and blade exits past your hip, I want to see that the paddle shaft stays and moves parallel to the body as long as possible in the stroke.

- 2) DEFINE if the goals are task oriented or outcome / performance oriented.

Continuing with the theme above:

“This drill is not meant to be competitive. Give yourself plenty of space, and don’t washride during the drill. I want to see the stroke rate no higher than 50 strokes per minute so we take the time to focus on every stroke”

- 3) Get your athletes involved in the process of setting practice objectives. Have your athletes set TASK goals or objectives for the practice, and guide them through the process ensuring they are task-oriented.

The more specific the information, the clearer the goal orientation will be for the athlete. As a coach, especially with younger developing athletes, never assume the athletes understand the goal orientation unless you (the coach) state it!

There is plenty of evidence to support that canoe-kayak is a highly technical sport. As coaches, we need to continually ensure we are creating a proper and effective learning environment to help athletes develop skill. One of the first steps in creating this learning environment is in the daily training goals and objectives, and thus focus of the athlete. The more we can teach athletes to be more focused on being task oriented, improving relative to themselves and mastering technique, the more they are hungry to improve and thus increase their self-confidence.

REFERENCES:

Young, B., Medic, N., *“Developing Sport Expertise”*, (main author – Dr. Joe Baker). 2009.

In the next Coaches Column:



The Coaches Column, February 14th, 2011

Coaching News – Coaches Week, NCCP Workshop calendar

Pete's PETs: Creating the Learning Environment Part II: TARGET Your Practices